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Same Air: Human Relationships in Playwriting

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SAME AIR: HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN PLAYWRITING

A Thesis

by

NICOLE CARDENAS

Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

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SAME AIR: HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN PLAYWRITING

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by
NICOLE CARDENAS

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May 2019

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ABSTRACT

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The culmination of the creative work and its introduction focus on human relationships, friendships, and the interactions and dynamics of individuals with traumatic experiences. The play explores how a secret can strain a group of friends, causing them to create their own realities to cope with the betrayal and guilt cultivated throughout time.

To reach my conclusions, I drew inspiration from various works, playwrights, and the words of other writers. My work is meant to showcase how fragile and resilient friendships are when faced with misunderstanding and lies.

DEDICATION

I dedicate the completion of my thesis to my parents, whose love and support helped me grow into the woman I am today. Thank you for never letting me give up on my dreams.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am eternally grateful to Dr. Carmona for fulfilling the position of chair for my thesis committee and encouraging me to apply for the MFA Program. His mentoring, advice, and collaboration help me grow as a writer and an individual.

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CHAPTER I

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Fiction has always been a solace for me. As a child, I would spend hours reading, and while I may have entertained the idea of writing; it wasn't until I took a second creative writing class that I tapped into my preferred genre, playwriting.

My piece came to existence by necessity. As matter of fact, the only reason I took a second creative writing class was because there were no other options to fulfil my elective course requirement. *You see*, I barely survived Creative Writing 1, and my poorly composed poems are a true testament to this fact. So, to say I was thrilled with the idea of taking Creative Writing 2 was the biggest understatement of my academic life. I swear I pictured myself drowning in the rumored mountains of paperwork! Yet, I attended the first five classes and tried my best to not let my inner chaos out onto those around me. Truth be told, my relationship with writing is not the most loving one, but rather it is a bond of discomfort and uncertainty at the worst possible times.

I found that the main source of my conflict comes from the doubt and misconceptions that surrounded my dyslexia. I may not be afraid to acknowledge this fact about myself today, but during my adolescence, it was used as a weapon to manifest insecurity. I had various acquaintances and educators tell me: I wasn't smart enough, my writing lacked any real significance, and commented that my dyslexia was always going to hold you back. Foolishly, I

believed some of them for time, but that semester a metaphorical door opened. I had a professor who encouraged me to write my story in different genres and discover which one was best for me.

Summary and Themes

Same Air is a play that revolves around four characters and their secrets. Three years ago, the female protagonist, Valeria, ran from Emilio, her love interest, just as he was about establish their life in another town. She lied about the reason why she ended their relationship, and he accepted their end without question. But now, her best friend, Anabel and Josh, his half-brother are getting married, and they must find a way to survive the wedding without causing a scene. Henceforth, the time has come for Valeria, Anabel, Miguel, and Emilio to tell their secrets and try to survive the aftermath of their grand reveal. My play deals with the themes of rape, revenge, sibling rivalry, and sisterhood.

The Woolf at the Wedding: Learning Character Conflicts from Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Playwriting for me was a gold ticket. I was enticed by the way a story could be told through stage directions and purposeful dialogue. In fact, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Edward Albee is a major influence for my piece. In his drama, Albee uses mirror characters to depict the public and private lives of two married couples. George and Martha parallel Nick and Honey in many respects. Both couples have ambitions, failures, and have created their own realities as a way to cope with their unhappy lives.

For instance, their marriages could be not any more different. Martha reveals that while they are unhappy now, George “came, bright eyed, into the History Department. And do you know what I did, dumb cluck that I am? [...] I fell for him. (Albee 1.736). While Nick tells them

that “I wouldn't say there was any...particular passion between us, even at the beginning...of our marriage, I mean. (Albee 2.163). Thus, both pairs entered into a marriage for different reasons, George and Martha were in love; while Nick thought Honey was pregnant. Another example of their mirror quality is the way Nick does not care that his wife is drinking or can walk in and see him kissing Martha. Whereas, Martha says,

George who is out somewhere there in the dark... George who is good to me, and whom I revile; who understands me, and whom I push off; who can make me laugh, and I choke it back in my throat; who can hold me, at night, so that it's warm, and whom I will bite so there's blood; who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy and I do not wish to be happy, and yes I do wish to be happy. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad... whom I will not forgive for having come to rest; for having seen me and having said: yes; this will do; who has made the hideous, the hurting, the insulting mistake of loving me and must be punished for it. George and Martha: sad, sad, sad... who tolerates, which is intolerable; who is kind, which is cruel; who understands, which is beyond comprehension...

Henceforth, all the constant insults and belittlements, do not take away the fact that George and Martha still love one another.

Both couples also have different sources of unhappiness in their lives. In George and Martha's case, their discontent comes from George's unsuccessful attempt to obtain a prestigious position in her father's university. This is seen through the following lines, “George: there are easier things than being married to the daughter of the president of that university. [...] Martha: [...] for some men it would be the chance of a life time (Albee 1.234-1.235). Also, Martha often comments on George's big ambitions, yet, she also reminds the audience, “Georgie

boy didn't have the stuff [...] he wasn't particularly...aggressive. In fact, he was [...] A great...big...gat...FLOP!" (Albee 1.7) While Nick's hints about his own marital discontent were seen only through action. It wasn't until George announces, "Martha didn't tell us all about my my second novel. [...] this nice young couple comes out of the Middle West, and he's blond and about thirty [...] his mouse is a wifey little type who gargles brandy all time." This scene exposes the truth about Nick and Honey's relationship. The illusion of the happy young couple ends, and thus the older couple once more proves they aren't the only one living in a fictional world.

The theme of fiction is carefully woven throughout the play. Martha and George create a make-believe game regarding an absentee son to deal with their unhappy lives. This make shift illusion is supposed to exist solely between George and Martha, yet the night that Nick and Honey come by for drinks, Martha changes the rules. She admits, "Truth or illusion, George; you don't know the difference (Albee 3.1). Yet, by the end of the night, George has had enough of Martha's fantasy and decides to face the reality along with uncovering the lack of communication in Nick and Honey's marriage. Thus, evoking the title of the play, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

In my play, not only did I stick to four characters like Albee, but I also mirrored Miguel and Anabel to Emilio and Valeria. Unlike Albee's characters, mine do not differ in age, instead their juxtaposition is in their occupations. Anabel is a nurse while Miguel is struggling to establish in his own construction business; and Valeria is a teacher, and Emilio is a lead engineer. Their differing professions allowed me to showcase their personalities, sense of responsibility, and power dynamic in their relationship. Henceforth, Anabel and Emilio have jobs that are viewed as more prestigious than the job of their partners.

Another mirror aspect in my play is that the players have their own misconceptions about their partners. Emilio believes that Valeria betrayed on him. Hence, he often states Valeria “cheated on me”, and “she didn’t want the future I planned for us.” However, Emilio doesn’t know that Valeria has lied to him for the past three years. In fact, it is Anabel, who introduces the audience to the idea of their flawed past. In the opening scene, Anabel tells Valeria, “You’re the one that never told him the truth!”

While in the case of Miguel and Anabel, Anabel is unaware of Miguel’s transgression. In fact, on the day of the wedding, Valeria figures out that Anabel’s husband is the man that raped her. Henceforth, for three plus years, Miguel has been a part of their lives with the knowledge that not only did he ruin his half-brother’s happiness but also took advantage of his girlfriend’s best friend. The irony of this situation is that Anabel had hoped that Miguel would help her get Emilio and Valeria back together, because she believes that their reunion will grant her forgiveness and peace of mind. Thus, the knowledge of Miguel’s secret causes Anabel to question everything. First, she goes to Emilio to try to sort out the timeline of the incident. She asks, “Didn’t you and Miguel have a huge fight?,” and she spares no questions in her path to the truth. Second, she confesses to Valeria that, “I should’ve known something was up when he freaked out the first time he saw you, but I let him convince me it was nerves.” Consequently, these scenes demonstrating that Anabel’s starting to accept that her “perfect relationship” with Miguel was merely an illusion.

Another mirror characteristic in my play is that Miguel and Anabel are in a different stage of their relationship compared to Emilio and Valeria. At the time of my play, Miguel and Anabel have gone through all the stages of a relationship that lead to making the decision to walk down the aisle. While at the same time, Emilio and Valeria’s relationship has already dissolved

in its three-year hiatus. In fact, Emilio is reminded by Anabel in the fourth scene that they “dated for three years,” and he came back several weekends to try to talk to her after the break up. This conversation helps him realize that he wasn’t able to fight for what he wanted then, but now with Anabel by his side, he may have a chance. Therefore, their exchange is meant to depict the different lengths they would each would go for love. Anabel is willingly to use her wedding night to help her friend, while Emilio concentrates solely on his own love. Henceforth, throughout the play, Emilio comes to terms with the fact that Miguel got married to love of his life, and he’s also the reason that his own love abandon him.

Glass, Blood, and Weddings: Exploring Memory and Trauma through Williams’ Glass Menagerie and Lorca’s Blood Wedding

I also analyzed *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams in preparation for my thesis. This memory play follows the life of Tom Wingfield as he struggles to find a way out of family obligations and his job at the shoe factory. A while back, Tom’s father, a telephone worker, left the family and consequently, made Tom the man of the house. Henceforth, Tom is made in charge of providing income to support and finance the family. His mother, Amanda, and sister, Laura, are also trapped in the shadow of the father’s abandonment as they both cannot seem to find ways to make each other happy. For instance, when Amanda finds out that Laura quit attending Business College, she asks, “You did all that to deceive me, just for deception! Why? Why? Why? Why?” To which Laura comments, “Mother, when you’re disappointed, you get that awful suffering look on your face, like the picture of Jesus’ mother in the Museum.” This exchange continues with the ultimate question, “what are we going to do now, honey, the rest of our lives?....Amuse ourselves with [your] glass menagerie?...What is there left for us now but dependency all our lives? I tell you, Laura, I know so well what happens to unmarried who aren’t

prepared to occupy a position in life” (Williams 1.2). Consequently, all their preparations to survive without a partner have failed, and both mother and daughter feel unsatisfied with their current situation.

Each of these characters create their own fantasies to deal with their bitter realities. Tom escapes with alcohol and various visits to the movie theater where he claims to see the adventure he longs for. Amanda tries to convince him, “Most young men find adventure in their careers” (Williams 1.5). Yet, Tom argues, “Most young men are not employed in a warehouse” (Williams 1.5). And he is not “in love with the Continental Shoemakers,...[and he does not]... want to spend fifty-five years of [his] life down there in that –celotex interior! with fluorescent tubes?!” (Williams 1.3). While Amanda’s distraction, however, is not to escape, it is the “idea of getting a gentlemen caller for...Laura. [It is a complete] obsession...The image of the gentleman caller haunt[s] [their] small apartment” and become the play’s driving force (Williams 1.1). In fact, this obsession allows her to hold onto memories of her own courtship and relive the glory days before she made the mistake of marrying their father. Whereas Laura, who is crippled, retreats into herself and is obsessed with caring for her glass menagerie. These characters would rather hold on to their delusions than face the fact that their realities have become a burden to each other. The madness ends, when Tom brings home an engaged suitor for his sister and “make[s] fools of them” (Williams 2.7). He also decides to leave home, but his new found adventure does not bring him peace. He states, “I went much farther.... followed, from then on, in my father’s footsteps...I traveled around a great deal...then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. I turn around and look into her eyes...Oh Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be! (Williams 2.7) Thus, proving to himself that his longing for adventure cannot rid him of his past.

In *Same Air*, Anabel and Miguel use their wedding and time on stage to play out their own agendas. Anabel wants to get Emilio and Valeria to talk about their issues and get back together, but Miguel wants to keep them apart so that his own secret is not revealed. However, what the audience doesn't know is that not only does Emilio not fully comprehend what happened to Valeria, but Anabel feels that that rape was her fault. She believes that her constant need to advise Valeria to "get out there" and move out of her comfort zone prompted her to take a chance and go out with friends on the night of the incident. Therefore, throughout the play, Anabel tries to clear her conscience by encouraging Valeria to talk to Emilio and put her in situation where she would have no other choice. She even goes as far as to manipulate her husband and brother-in-law to join in her scheme. Her lines, "If you don't help, I'll show everyone your pictures from last week. Your momma won't like that..." (to her husband), and "I swear, it's like you two weren't dating for three years before all hell broke loose (to Emilio)." were meant to cause the men help her rather than go against her. Ultimately, her dedication to give her friend a happily ever after has no bounds. For even in the final scene when she tells Emilio and Valeria, "Both of you have been miserable for so long! And when [Miguel and I] told you about the wedding arrangements, it seemed like everything finally fell into place. You started acting like yourself, and Emilio dumped his good for nothing girlfriend." Thus, until her final moment on stage, she's trying to savage their relationship and genuinely believes her scheme would work. But as Valeria mentions, she's choosing myself this time, and Emilio and Anabel need to "stop holding onto the past".

Tennessee William also wrote *A Streetcar named Desire*, which centered around two sisters who have faced their own struggles with men. Blanche and Stella have completely different attitudes in regard to their dependency on men and financial situations. Stella, the

young sister, is content to live in a diverse working-class part of town with Stanley, her husband, who drinks and occasionally hits her. In fact, in Act 1 Scene 4, Blanche questions her taste in Stanley after he hits her, but Stella fights her back and states:

I wish you'd just let things go, at least for a –while...

Blanche: Stella, I can't live with him! You can, he's your husband. But how could I stay here with him, after last night, with just those curtains between us?

Stella: Blanche, you saw him at his worst last night.

Blanche: On the contrary, I saw him at his best! What such a man has to offer is animal force and he gave a wonderful exhibition of that! But the only way to live with such a man is to-go to bed with him!

Her continual desire to belittle Stanley damages the sisters' relationship, for Blanche even comments on his behavior. She tells her:

Well-if you'll forgive me-he's common...He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one! There's even something-bub-human-something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something-ape-like about him...Maybe we are a long way being made in God's image, but Stella- my sister-there has been some progress since then! (Williams 1.4).

It seems that while Blanche is a fallen woman who longs for the fortune and life that she once possessed in the South, she wants to protect her sister. Yet, she goes about it the wrong way. Instead throughout the play, both of these women try to convince each other that their current lifestyle could improve if they changed their mindset and accepted their present situation.

Unfortunately, that is not the only conflict in the play, Stanley, Stella's husband does not take Blanche's new residence in their home with a warm heart. Moreover, Blanche and Stanley

constantly fight and find ways to embarrass each other. This conflicted relationship leads to a dreadful night in which Stella goes to the hospital to give birth to their child, and Stanley gets drunk and tells her,

Oh you want some rough-house! All right, let's have some rough-house!

[He springs towards her, overturning the table. She cries out and strikes him with a bottle top but he catches her wrist.]

Tiger-tiger! Drop the bottle-top! Drop it! We've has this date with each other from the beginning!

[She moans. The bottle-top falls. She sinks to her knees. He picks her inert figure and carries her to the bed.] (Williams 1.10) .

Thus, this scene suggests that Stanley rapes Blanche, and yet the misery continues. Stella and Stanley have Blanche committed to a mental hospital in the final scene; because, Stella refuses to believe that her husband sexually assaulted her sister. Ultimately, Stanley wins, and he will continue to have control over the women. This is proven when he approaches Stella at the end of the play,

Stanley: Stella?

[She sobs with inhuman abandon. There is something luxiours in her complete surrender to crying no that her sister is gone.]

Stanley [voluptuously, soothingly]

Now, honey. Now. Love. Now, now, love. [he kneels beside her and his fingers find the opening of her blouse] (Williams 1. 10).

Unlike *A Streetcar Named Desire*, I did not want misfortune and trauma to seep out of every crevice of my play. Valeria's past did not break her. She does not suffer from delusions as

many former female fictional characters have in the past. As a matter of fact, she tells Emilio that she “didn’t want to be a victim” and is depicted as a strong independent woman who cares for her child. I also didn’t want Valeria surrounded by friends that pitied her or refused to acknowledge that she was raped. I wanted her, Valeria, to be in a different mindset at the time of the wedding reception. She was not to enter the scene as a victim, but as a friend who was there to help celebrate her friends’ happiness even if it meant facing her former lover. This is seen, when Valeria reveals to Anabel, “The only reason, I agreed to be here is because you are my best friend. And of course, I acted like myself again, why was I going to throw a fit? It’s not my wedding! I just wanted to be here for you like you were there for me all those years ago.”

An aspect I borrowed from *A Street Car Desire*, is the way Stanley is characterized. In fact, Miguel and Stanley are similar in various ways. Both characters try to deceive their lovers in order to hide their crime. For instance, Stanley is able to convince Stella that her sister, Blanche has lost her mind. Thus, her accusations fall to deaf ears. However, I did not want that to be the case in my play. I wanted Anabel to see Miguel as he truly is. A man that enters the bridal’s dressing room, undresses without shame, and pretends he didn’t rape her best friend. The women in my play were not his toys. While he was able to fool them for the past three years, they were not going to continue with his charade.

Another influence for my piece is *Blood Wedding* by Federico Garcia Lorca. This drama focuses on the misfortune of three lovers. It opens with the Bridegroom and the Bride preparing for their wedding. However, the contradiction lays in the fact that the Bride is in love with a married man, Leonardo, who is also her former lover. It seems that the families of the Bride and Leonardo did not agree in their union; thus, he finds himself married to her cousin. Yet, as soon as he learns that the Bride is going to marry the Bridegroom, he decides to venture into his old ways

and try to change her mind. On the day of the wedding, he tells her, “We cannot punish ourselves worse than to burn and stay silent. What good did my pride do me-not seeing you, and knowing you were lying awake night after night. None! It only poured blazing coals over me. You think time heals and that walls shuts away but it’s not true, it’s no true. When things have pierced to the centre nobody can pull them out” (Lorca 2.1). Leonardo seems to want to do anything to keep the bride for himself. To him, their love was eternal, and he can’t seem to accept the fact that they can’t be together. For he says, “ever since my own wedding day I’ve been asking myself night and day who was to blame. And I’m always finding somebody new to blame. – Because somebody somewhere must be to blame (Lorca 2.1).” These lines prove that he doesn’t think about anyone but himself and refuses to acknowledge any fault. It is no wonder, that this play ends in a tragedy for his pride and selfishness kills his chance at a happily ever after.

Much like Leonardo, I wrote Emilio stuck in the past. Henceforth, he frequently tries to blame everyone else for his own misery. In the beginning, he argues that Valeria is at fault for not wanting the life he planned for them. That’s why he tells Anabel, “The whole stack was piled against me! Valeria kept changing the rules.” And even when, Valeria tells him the truth, he is quick to react. Emilio lost everything to his half-brother, and it wasn’t the first time it happened either. But this time, the transgression was too great to overlook, and Miguel even tries to push his brother over edge. By stating, “She’s right you know. Not only did I enjoy her, but watching you fail to salvage our father’s company was priceless...I should thank you for signing it over to me.” It is this exact moment that the brothers’ ties are severed, but unfortunately for him, Emilio still didn’t get a happy ending. He lived through the truth, and now he needs time to process it. Henceforth, his comment at the end of the play is perfect, “I didn’t come all this way for a

goodbye” is the only appropriate ending. For this time, Valeria is not going to sacrifice her identity, love, and hope for him.

Sisters to the End: Learning Solidarity and Friendship from Josefina Lopez’s Real Women Have Curves

Another important theme in my drama is friendship, and one of the best examples of sisterhood in playwriting is *Real Women have Curves* by Josefina Lopez. In this play, five Mexican-American women work in a tiny sewing factory to meet impossible deadlines in order to keep themselves safe and secure from the possible threats of the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service.) Yet, the most important detail in the play is that it is told in the point of view of Ana, Estela’s sister and the youngest worker. Ana, who would rather be anywhere else than working in the small factory, for she dreams of writing and feels out of place. In a journal hidden in the bathroom of the factory, Ana writes, “Another day and we’re in deep...trouble...I keep having arguments with Pancha and even though she doesn’t like me, I feel sort of sorry for her I wish I could tell her what to do, but she won’t listen to me. Like the rest of the women, she won’t take me seriously. They make fun of me...So why do I stay? (Lopez 1.3). However, that summer this experience not only brings her closer to her family, but it also gives her an “understanding and appreciation of the work and the women, [which] eventually [leads her to write] an essay that wins her a journalism fellowship” to New York City. *Real Women have Curves* resonates friendship because these five women share their grievances, secrets, passions, and insecurities with one another as they work towards the common goal of saving one of their own. In fact, in their “subtle ways they taught [Ana] about resistance. About a battle no one was fighting for them except themselves...With their work that seems simple and unimportant, they

are fighting...Perhaps the greatest thing [lesson] from them is that women are powerful, especially when working together (Lopez 2.4).

In my own work, it was important to me that Anabel and Valeria were presented as dear friends whose companionship acknowledge not only their faults, but they both strived to support each other no matter the cause. As a matter of fact, their friendship is highlighted in the first scene of the play when the girls are telling each about their day. Valeria walks into their apartment later than usual because she had to prep to take days off and is also annoyed about criticism she received from a walk through her classroom. While Anabel is stressed about the wedding preparations, she has been helping her mother accomplished throughout the day. These friends may question if they could handle each other jobs, but they also understand that their positions are ones that they are both emotional invested in. Henceforth, their time talk on the couch reinforces their understanding and respect for one other.

Another scene in which Valeria and Anabel's friendship is prove strong is when Emilio questions Miguel about Valeria's presence at the wedding. In this moment, the audience is made aware that for the last three years Anabel and Miguel have been part of Valeria's life. This is contrary to Miguel's belief because he thought that when Valeria broke up with him the other couple would chose to side with him. Yet, now he realizes that even if she cheated on him, Anabel and Miguel still hold Valeria in high regard, and he is the only friend that this suffering in his own exile in Houston.

I also decided to make Anabel and Valeria roommates to create a sense of sisterhood. Anabel is the only character in the play that knows what happened to Valeria that night. She also knows all the details of Valeria's cover-up story and who the father of her child is. Henceforth, she is the driving force in my play, for she is in charge of getting the rest of the characters to reveal their past and secrets. Plus, I wanted Valeria to have someone to defend her from Emilio's

doubt and Miguel's false accusations. Women need to support one other. Anabel is also the only person in the play that is able to calm Emilio down and criticize him when needed. For example, when Anabel tries to get Emilio to consider that Valeria lied to him about their break up. She questions him, "Do you only hear what you want? To which, Emilio tries to control the situation by raising his voice and stating, "What the fuck, Anabel? I listen." So Anabel counters his temper with the following statement, "First off, don't get defensive on me. You tend to overact, curse, and raise your voice when you do." This exchange leads Anabel to remind Emilio of his own faults and show the audience why Valeria has kept her secret for so long.

Walking Down the Aisle: *Same Air* and Its Origins in Fiction and Poetry

An author and poet that I familiarize my work with is Michele Serro, a Chicana writer whose writing style focuses on identity and whose voice echoes the younger generation. In her fiction/poetry collection, *Chicana Falsa*, Serros shares her memories of growing up and finding her own identity in an environment that claims she's not a Chicana because of her "sloppy Spanish" or mannerisms. The reason I associate my work with this writer is because I connected with the following poem, *Annie say*,

You could never be a writer,
Let alone a poet.
What do you know?
I mean, what can you write about?
...
You got a D on your last book report
You gotta be able to write English good
Use big words...
...
The whole Chicano movement
Passing you by and
You don't even know about that.
You weren't born in no barrio.
No tortilleria down your street.
...

Bullets never whizzed
Past your baby head
...
Chicana without a cause
...
No, mija
Nobody will ever by your books
So, put your pencil down

This piece reminded me about my own struggles, and my battle to depict my characters as natives to the Rio Grande Valley. Truthfully, I struggled with placing my characters in my hometown of Brownsville, Texas. I was afraid of stereotypes, misinterpretations, and personal limitations. Yet, as I started to read more of Michele Serros' and Tanya Saracho's work, I began to understand the importance of culture in a play.

For instance, in *Enfrascada* by Tanya Saracho, I gravitated towards her use of stage directions, in particular the following note:

Overlapping is very important in this play because these women-these friends- they talk over each other, finish each other's sentences and can listen as they talk, you know, as Latin girlfriends do. Overlapping is denoted by a/.A// indicates a cue to the same speaker (Saracho Preface).

I see this sort of exchange every day of my life, but I didn't comprehend the power of this sort of exchange until I read this play. In *Enfrascada*, a group of friends try to help their friend, Alicia, win back her boyfriend with the counsel of bruja, hoodoo, and Santeria magic. And while all their attempts do not accomplish the task, this drama was much more than a dive into darkness. Rather it was about how these four young ladies, Yesenia, Caroline, Lulu, and Alicia go beyond the aid of the mortal world to try to ease the pain for the one their friend.

Another play that helped me set up my geographic location was *Mala Hierba* by Tanya Saracho. This drama takes place in Sharyland, Texas and mentions locations such as McAllen

and Nolana, and this helped me visualize the play I was reading it. Hence, I became curious, and wondered if I were to do that to my own play how would it change? I think the most important note I picked up from this drama was the reason that Liliana stays with her abusive husband. Her marriage as Yuya mentioned “is all an investment...And your Papi and your mamu, tu hermana Cecilia, you’re the only thinking they got. It’s not about you, it’s about them (Saracho 55).” Henceforth, she suffers in the quiet, so that those around her can get a better life. In my own piece, I wanted Valeria to share the same mentality about those around her. Thus, as my play unraveled I stressed that I wanted Emilio to realize that Valeria held onto her secret to help him move forward with his life. She knew that if she told him that she was raped when he was out of town trying to create their future; he would’ve gotten drunk and done something ridiculous to ruin the opportunities before him. Hence, she lied, and sacrifice her own happiness to make him content. For she strongly believed that by holding onto her own pain and suffering in silence, he would prosper in his chosen career path.

“You May Kiss the Bride”: Conclusion

Throughout this narrative, I was reminded about my own writing journey from the panic that still resurfaces when a major paper is due to sigh of relief when I find my muse. It wasn’t easy, but I’m glad it was a battle. Now, I am able to call myself a writer without running away, and all it took was a writing exercise on *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

SAME AIR

Written by

Nicole Cardenas

SAME AIR

A Play

by Nicole Cardenas

Characters:

Emilio 29-years old, Miguel's older half-brother
Valeria 26-years old, Maid of Honor
Alex 3 years old, Valeria's son
Miguel 27-years old, Emilio's younger half-brother and
 Groom
Anabel 25-years old, Valeria's best friend and Bride

Setting:

Brownsville, Texas.

Time:

The present.

Act One

Scene 1

SETTING: The living room in ANABEL and VALERIA's apartment. A couch with pillows, a chair, and a side table are centered on stage. On the side table is a framed photo.

AT RISE: ANABEL enters Stage Left wearing an apron. Her hair is tossed up in a bun. VALERIA enters through the door, Stage Right, and closes it behind her. She throws her purse on the couch.

ANABEL

Where you've been? My mom's going crazy in the kitchen! And I swear if I have to peel another potato, I'm just going to elope.

(Pause.)

I don't need this fancy wedding!

VALERIA

(laughs)

Yeah right!

ANABEL

You said you would help!

(VALERIA pulls out a stack of mail from her purse and passes it to Anabel.)

VALERIA

I had copies to run. You know my monsters will eat the sub if they don't have enough work to do while I'm absent.

ANABEL

(laughs)

They can't be that bad.

VALERIA

I'll trade you jobs any day!

ANABEL

You wouldn't even survive a shift! You get nauseous if anyone next to you throws up.

VALERIA

Ha, that's why I'm not a nurse. Plus, some of us need to teach freshmen to write critically.. I mean teach them how to pass a state exam...

ANABEL

You got observed again, huh?

VALERIA

It was BS. I'm not teaching enough test taking strategies or whatever. Do we still have the bottle of wine from your bridal shower?

ANABEL

Yeah, it's in the fridge. Get me a glass!

(VALERIA exits Stage Left. ANABEL looks through the stack of mail and places the stack on the side table. VALERIA enters Stage Left with a pair of wine glasses.)

VALERIA

How many people did you invite? Your mom has enough food in there to feed the next town over!

(Hands ANABEL a glass)

ANABEL

I don't even know anymore...she's more worried about all the extra guests that randomly show up.

(THEY sit on the sofa.)

VALERIA

Isn't she going to complain that you're hiding over here?

ANABEL

I'm not hiding.

(takes a sip of wine)

Plus, she's making me wash the dishes later.

VALERIA

Whatever, she's going to come for you! Watch!

ANABEL

(laughs)

Shut up! Let me enjoy my wine...

(Pause.)

So...

VALERIA

What?

ANABEL

Are you ready for tomorrow?

VALERIA

Aren't I supposed to be asking you that?

ANABEL

Val, I'm not the one that cleaned the apartment three times this week.

(smiles)

Mom almost had a heart attack when she walked in this morning.

(laughs)

But seriously, what's up?

VALERIA

Nothing.

ANABEL

So, you aren't worried about seeing Emilio again?

VALERIA

We don't even know if he's going to show.

ANABEL

I have my ways.

VALERIA

Oh, yeah? What was it this time?

(Pause.)

Blackmail? Extortion? Oh I know, a good old fashion lie!

ANABEL

You make me sound psychotic.

VALERIA

Well if you consider the scene you pulled at the tuxedo shop...

ANABEL

(embarrassed)

Oh my god...it's so not my fault the man wanted to a fast one. And I refuse to have my fiancée looks like an idiot in an oversized suit.

VALERIA

Sure.

ANABEL

Stop changing the subject! We were talking about Emilio.

VALERIA

There's nothing to talk about.

ANABEL

What? Three years ago, you swore he was the love of your life!

VALERIA

Was.

(Pause.)

He was the love of my life. Now he's your fiancée's half-brother. That's it.

(takes a drink from her glass)

ANABEL

You're so full of shit! You need to stop avoiding every instance the universe throws you both together.

VALERIA

(laughs)

The universe, really? I hardly think that the universe cares about two former lovers.

(Pause.)

And I'm not avoiding him. I saw him two years ago.

ANABEL

(smirks)

Really? Two years ago?

(Pause.)

Was it the time you got drunk on mango margaritas at my birthday party and practically knocked over my little cousin?

(laughs)

Because I swear that is my favorite memory of you!

VALERIA

I swear your momma wanted to smack me.

ANABEL

Good, she would've knock some sense into you!

(Pause.)

Emilio wants to talk you.

VALERIA

No, he doesn't. Every time he sees me, it's like someone crashed his truck.

ANABEL

Why else would he drive from Houston?

VALERIA

He might want to be here for his brother's wedding...

ANABEL

Trust me, they aren't that close. Even now.

VALERIA

Yeah well, I doubt he would come for me.

ANABEL

That's not what I heard.

VALAERIA

What did he tell you?

ANABEL

Nothing, but...

VALERIA

There's no buts...plus you said that he was dating someone.

ANABEL

You're so much better than her.

VALERIA

You know it's his decision, right?

ANABEL

I'm not kidding, she's so annoying!

VALERIA

You're annoying!

(Pause.)

And if you're so worried about his current girlfriend, why don't you talk to him?

ANABEL

You're the one that never told him the truth!

VALERIA

(glances to the direction of Stage Left)

And I'm not going to.

(Pause.)

Unless you invited a hot Spanish actor, your wedding isn't going to be a telenovela.

(finishes her glass)

I should've brought the bottle with me.

ANABEL

Weddings are supposed to be drama!

VALERIA

Anabel!

ANABEL

What? I haven't done anything!

VALERIA

I know you. Tomorrow, my only responsibilities include getting you to the altar in one piece and signing your wedding license. I'm not going to be the entertainment.

ANABEL

Whatever you say. I still think that you should at least tell him.

VALERIA

Why? It's too late. He has his life in Houston, and mine is here with Alex.

ANABEL

You don't know that!

VALERIA

He wouldn't understand.

ANABEL

Why are you making that decision for him?

VALERIA

Because it's my decision, too. Both our lives were affected by it, but I refuse to have it hang over his head.

ANABEL

How's that fair?

VALERIA

Life isn't fair. I've learned to live with it. Why can't you?

ANABEL

(annoyed)

Is this how you pictured your life?

VALERIA

What?

ANABEL

Living here with me in a small apartment and spending your weekends hiding away. I know you love teaching and all that, but don't you want to fall in love again? Don't you want someone to grow old with? And what about Alex? He needs a father figure!

VALERIA

Here we go again...

ANABEL

You deserve more than this!

VALERIA

I'm living my life.

ANABEL

There's a difference between living your life and wasting away.

VALERIA

Stop being so dramatic!

ANABEL

Fine, just answer me this question: When was the last time you went out?

VALERIA

(practically screams)

What happened last time I went out? Huh?

(ANABEL stares at HER in shock.)

ANABEL

Valeria, I didn't mean...

VALERIA

(immediately regrets her words)

Damn it.

ANABEL

No, it's fine. I shouldn't be pushing you.

VALERIA

No, Anabel, the truth is that I don't think I can tell him. He already...did you pick up the dresses from the seamstress?

ANABEL

(looks at VALERIA curiously but doesn't ask HER what EMILIO did)

Yeah, mom drove me.

VALERIA

(nods in agreement) `

You know, I'm okay. I mean, I could've done without your bras hanging on the shower curtain or finding Miguel's boxers under the couch last week. But-

(ANABEL grabs a pillow from behind HER and smacks VALERIA with it.)

ANABEL

We made it to my room, jerk!

VALERIA

I'm burning this sofa when you move out.

(ANABEL and VALERIA laugh)

ANABEL

Don't you want to be more than okay?

VALERIA

What do you mean?

ANABEL

I'm worried about you! What's going to happen when I move out?

What about the nightmares? Can you handle all the bills?

(Pause.)

I'm going to give you half of next month's rent. And before you even try to argue with me, I already talked to Miguel about it. He's fine with it.

VALERIA

Woah! Calm down!

(VALERIA grabs ANABEL's hand and squeezes it, trying to reassure her friend.)

It's gonna be okay, Anabel. I can handle the bills, and why would you pay half the rent when you aren't even living here? Save your money! Isn't Miguel building your dream house?

ANABEL

(smiles)

Yeah, he already started remodeling the kitchen. I don't know who's going to cook in there, but he's excited.

VALERIA

See everything is working out!

(Recording of a female's voice is heard off stage calling for ANABEL to come to the kitchen and wash the dishes.)

ANABEL

That woman doesn't believe in a dishwasher!

VALERIA

(laughs)

She told me why have a dishwasher when she has you!

(ANABEL scowls at VALERIA before SHE exits Stage Left.)

(A three year old, boy, enters and runs towards VALERIA. SHE hugs HIM for a bit. Pulling away SHE starts talking to HIM.)
Alex, did you have fun with Grandma Clarissa today?

(ALEX goes off into a story, and VALERIA laughs. SHE notices the glasses on the coffee table and picks them up.)

VALERIA

Anabel, you forgot the glasses!

ANABEL

(off stage)

Don't you dare!

Valeria

(to HER son)

Let's go help, Aunt Anabel, before she breaks Mommy's dishes.

(ALEX and VALERIA exits Stage Left.)

END OF SCENE

Act One

Scene 2

SETTING: Next day. After Miguel and Anabel's reception, most of the guests are gone. The bridal boutique and a bottle of whiskey with a pair of glasses are on the bar counter Stage Left. A table and chairs are Center Stage.

AT RISE: MIGUEL enters Stage Right. HE looks around for the bar, grabs a bottle and the glasses from the counter and walks to an empty table.

(Content MIGUEL pours and downs a glass of whiskey. ANABEL enters Stage Right and sits beside him.)

ANABEL

(excited)

We did it! We're married!

MIGUEL

Yea, we did.

(leans over and kisses HER)

Remind me again why we aren't leaving for the honeymoon tonight?

ANABEL

Our mothers wanted the perfect reception.

MIGUEL

And?

ANABEL

What do you mean "and"? We needed to be here for them.

MIGUEL

(kisses her neck through this line)

I can't wait for sun, sand, and you. No more family or friends stealing you away from me.

(ANABEL laughs and kisses him for a while.)

(EMILIO enters. Clears his throat. MIGUEL looks up and glares.)

EMILIO

(kind of embarrassed)

Sorry to interrupt. I wanted to congratulate you on your-

(EMILIO tries to greet MIGUEL, but MIGUEL cuts HIM off.)

MIGUEL

(annoyed)

What are you doing here?

EMILIO

I was invited.

MIGUEL

What?

(Pause.)

By who?

EMILIO

You.

MIGUEL

(looks at ANABEL without a second thought)

What did you do?

ANABEL

You know how important family is to me, Miguel! Plus, he's your brother!

MIGUEL

(ignores HER comment and turns to HIS unwanted guest)

You shouldn't have bothered.

(ANABEL gets up from HER chair and offers it to EMILIO. HE shakes HIS head and grabs HIS own and sits next to ANABEL.)

EMILIO

(reaches for a glass and pours himself one)

Thanks for the warm welcome.

MIGUEL

What do you want?

EMILIO

Where's Valeria?

(MIGUEL tenses, but EMILIO doesn't notice. ANABEL looks around for her friend.)

ANABEL

She was here. I think she's-

MIGUEL

(cuts her off)

You only came for her, didn't you?

EMILIO

(ignores his question)

How's the business?

MIGUEL

Good.

ANABEL

Miguel! Don't be stubborn!

(Pause.)

Tell him.

MIGUEL

(glares at her)

It's fine.

ANABEL

(ignores him.)

No, it's not fine. We're having trouble establishing a clientele.

MIGUEL

He has no right to know-

ANABEL

It was his company, Miguel! He can help you.

EMILIO

It's fine, Anabel. Miguel knows when to ask for help.

(takes a drink)

If he says he's fine then he's fine.

MIGUEL

(irritated)

Is that why you brought him here? You thought I needed his help.

I told you that I would take care of it.

ANABEL

What if...

MIGUEL

No.

(ANABEL rolls HER eyes and turns HER attention to EMILIO.)

ANABEL

Emilio, thanks for coming. How was the drive?

EMILIO

Sorry for coming so late. I was only able to get half a day.

ANABEL

Don't worry about it. You didn't miss much.

(Hands ANABEL an envelope)

Congrats.

MIGUEL

We don't want or need anything from you.

EMILIO

(annoyed at HIS brother's antics)

Really? That's not what you said when I gave you the company.

MIGUEL

Yeah, it should've been mine in the first place.

(EMILIO pours himself another glasses.)

EMILIO

Cut the entitlement act. Didn't you get everything you wanted today? You have a beautiful wife and a growing business.

(Pause.)

Why are you still picking a fight?

MIGUEL

I'm not the one that-

ANABEL

Miguel, don't even start!

EMILIO

I'm going to look for Mom.

MIGUEL

She's not your mother.

EMILIO

It's not like I'll find our father. Now if you will excuse me.

(EMILIO exits.)

ANABEL

Do you need to be such a jerk?

MIGUEL

I told you not to invite him. Why can't you ever mind your own business?

ANABEL

My business is your business. Or weren't we in the same ceremony five hours ago?

MIGUEL

You didn't have to tell him about my failure.

ANABEL

Miguel, he can help you. I know you have your pride, but can't you swallow it? Emilio has formal employers, and I'm sure if he puts in a good word for you. They will give you a -

MIGUEL

No! I want to build my own legacy. He will have no part in it.

(Pause.)

I won't share my recognition. You'll see, our home will be a testament of my hard work and dedication.

ANABEL

Yes, Sweetie.

(ANABEL gets up from her chair and sits on his lap. ANABEL starts playing with his collar.)

Can we please go back to the part that we were celebrating the night?

MIGUEL

We still would've been celebrating if he hadn't come by.

ANABEL

I'm sorry.

(Pause.)

Don't let him ruin our night.

MIGUEL

Why did you invite him?

ANABEL

I'm worried about Valeria.

MIGUEL

How's Emilio supposed to help her?

ANABEL

They're meant to be together.

MIGUEL

How can you be so sure about that?

(Pause.)

He hasn't made a move to talk to her.

ANABEL

He came today. That's something.

MIGUEL

Are you sure about this? Is this what you want to spend the night doing?

(Pause.)

There's a hotel room at the Island waiting for us.

ANABEL

Not at all, but what other choice do we have?

MIGUEL

Let them work it out themselves.

ANABEL

(playfully glares at him)

Please, Honey, I can't leave for the honeymoon knowing I could've helped them.

(Pause.)

Didn't you promise to do anything to make me happy? This would make me really happy.

MIGUEL

(amused)

I don't remember such a promise.

ANABEL

Miguel!

MIGUEL

Yes, Sweetheart?

(ANABEL leans into him.)

ANABEL

If you don't help, I'll show everyone your pictures from last week. Your momma won't like that...

MIGUEL

(laughs)

No need to blackmail me, Baby. We can save those games for later. Where's Valeria anyway?

ANABEL

I don't know. I haven't seen her since her speech.

MIGUEL

Well...what do you have in mind?

ANABEL

They need to end their game of hide and seek.

(Pause.)

Let's get them to hide in the same place.

MIGUEL

How would we do that?

ANABEL

Mhmm...You can lure, Val, into the dressing room with a wedding gown emergency. Tell her some of the beading is unraveling or something!

MIGUEL

What if she doesn't believe me?

ANABEL

She knows how important this dress is to me. Plus, I'm saving it for our future daughter!

MIGUEL

Are you trying to tell me that...

ANABEL

Don't be a doofus! Now as for Emilio, you're going to have to get him in there somehow. Use force if necessary.

(smiles)

I'll hold the door open for you, if you want to throw him in.

MIGUEL

(smirks)

I seem to be the one doing all the work here.

ANABEL

Of course, I'm the mastermind of the operation, and you, my love, are the muscle.

(kisses him.)

Now let's get you to work!

MIGUEL

Since I'm risking multiple injuries, you need to tell everything.

ANABEL

About what?

MIGUEL

Why does it feel like you're hiding something from me?

ANABEL

I swear you know everything.

MIGUEL

No, you always look to the side when you're lying.

ANABEL

Miguel, it's not my secret to tell.

MIGUEL

Anabel, instead of enjoying own wedding night, you're willing to run around and try to get them back together. Why does it mean so much to you?

ANABEL

It wasn't her fault!

(pause.)

She didn't choose any of this, and I need your help to fix this mess! Can you please help me?

(MIGUEL hugs ANABEL.)

MIGUEL

Let's go find them.

(ANABEL and MIGUEL exit Stage Left hand in hand.)

END OF SCENE

Act One

Scene 3

SETTING: Dressing room within the reception building. A vanity sits on Stage Left. A garment rack stands Stage Right. A pair of chairs, toilette bags, and spare clothes are laying on a couch Stage Left.

AT RISE: VALERIA is pacing the around the room looking for something, her purse. The door opens and MIGUEL enters Stage Right. VALERIA takes a step back in surprise.

MIGUEL

Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you.

(hangs HIS suit jacket on a chair)

I need a new shirt.

(gestures to the stain on HIS shirt)

VALERIA

No, it's fine. I was grabbing something.

(VALERIA finds HER purse and goes through the contents.

MIGUEL misinterprets the gesture.)

MIGUEL

You're leaving?

(VALERIA pulls a phone from HER purse and sets it down.)

VALERIA

No, I wanted to check on Alex. My mom took him for the night.

MIGUEL

I'm sorry. I ...

VALERIA

Assumed that I would run off because Emilio was here.

MIGUEL

You heard?

VALERIA

Anabel mentioned he might come by.

MIGUEL

(dry)

Is that so?

VALERIA

(turns back to HER phone.)

Maybe, she forgot to tell you.

MIGUEL

I'm glad you decided to stick around.

(Pause.)

I don't think Anabel would've forgive me if I let you go now.

VALERIA

(smiles weakly)

Yeah.

(MIGUEL laughs and walks across the stage looking through the bags.)

MIGUEL

Did she pack me a shirt?

VALERIA

(teases)

Oh yeah, she knew you would need it!

MIGUEL

(laughs)

It wasn't my fault!

(VALERIA laughs and moves closer to MIGUEL. SHE starts looking for the shirt alongside HIM.)

VALERIA

It should be around here.

(Pause.)

What cologne is that? It smells familiar.

MIGUEL

It's Connected by Kenneth Cole. Anabel got it for me when we started dating.

VALERIA

I've never noticed it on you.

MIGUEL

I don't use it often.

VALERIA

(lost in HER thoughts)

Oh...

MIGUEL

You know Anabel's always shopping.

VALERIA

(walks to the garment rack and goes through it)

Yeah.

MIGUEL

Hey, you remember that spring break we were all supposed to meet at the Island?

VALERIA

Sure, but didn't you bail on us?

MIGUEL

Yeah, and oh boy, did I not hear the end of that from Anabel for weeks!

(Pause.)

I had a paper due that Monday morning, so I didn't have much of a choice.

(VALERIA grabs the shirt and removes the hanger.)

Anyway my point is that if I hadn't begged for her forgiveness, we wouldn't be here. Wifey sure does know how to hold a grunge.

VALERIA

(ignores the comment)

Found it.

MIGUEL

Thanks!

(starts to unbutton HIS shirt)

You don't mind?

VALERIA

No, it's fine.

(MIGUEL takes off HIS shirt to reveal a lion tattoo on HIS left side of his chest.)

You have a tattoo.

MIGUEL

(looks down at his tattoo)

Got it freshmen year. Like it?

(takes the shirt from HER hands and dresses)

VALERIA

(voice shakes)

It was you, wasn't it?

MIGUEL

What?

(notices HER change in demeanor)

Val, you okay?

VALERIA

You were the one that kept buying me drinks that night.

(MIGUEL stays quiet.)

VALERIA

(screams)

Tell me the truth, Miguel.

MIGUEL

You're confusing me with someone else.

VALERIA

No, you were the one at the bar!

MIGUEL

What bar?

VALERIA

(panicked)

Oh my god...oh my god...

MIGUEL

(worried)

Do you need me to get you someone?

VALERIA

How could you?

(MIGUEL walks towards HER, but SHE pulls away from HIS grasp.)

MIGUEL

Honey, it's going to be okay.

VALERIA

(screams)

Get away from me!

MIGUEL

You need to calm down.

(Pause.)

You're making a scene.

VALERIA

Do you think I care?

(Pause.)

It was you!

MIGUEL

What!

VALERIA

I remember that cologne and your tattoo!

MIGUEL

(pretends to misunderstand VALERIA's accusations)

Is that your secret? Did someone...

VALERIA

(practically screams)

Yeah, you did!

MIGUEL

Why don't I get you a drink?

(Pause.)

I know today's been stressful for you.

VALERIA

(tries to get out of the room)

No!

MIGUEL

I'm not letting you out until you promise to calm down. I don't want people getting the wrong idea.

VALERIA

Do you think I care about what you want?

(Pause.)

I need to get out of here!

MIGUEL

Do you know how many men wear this cologne and have a lion tattoo?

(Pause.)

It's a coincidence.

VALERIA

(calmly)

A coincidence? That night couldn't have been a coincidence. You knew didn't you.

MIGUEL

Knew what?

VALERIA

Who I was?

MIGUEL

Yeah.

VALERIA

(confused)

Then why did you...if you knew...why?

MIGUEL

Why should Emilio get everything?

VALERIA

What?

MIGUEL

I had every right to my father's company, yet they overlooked me...They always overlooked me, but they won't anymore.

VALERIA

You have the company!

MIGUEL

Exactly! I do now.

(Pause.)

It only cost a night with you. Seems like a fair trade off.

VALERIA

What's your problem?

MIGUEL

(laughs)

You dated my brother for three years, and you didn't know who I was...well aren't you ignorant?

(ANABEL enters Stage Right unnoticed.)

VALERIA

Don't you dare turn this around on me! You forced yourself on me!

ANABEL

What? No! That's impossible.

(MIGUEL and VALERIA turn at the sound of HER voice.)

MIGUEL

(walks towards HER and tries to take control of the situation)

Sweetie, Valeria doesn't know what she's saying.

VALERIA

(grabs HER purse and tries to walk pass THEM.)

Screw you!

MIGUEL

You see, she's trying to ruin your day!

VALERIA

I hope you two are happy together!

ANABEL

(rejects MIGUEL'S embrace and tries to reach VALERIA)

Val, I swear I didn't know.

VALERIA

(turns HER back on HER friend.)

Yeah, right.

(ANABEL exits.)

MIGUEL

(stalks towards VALERIA and grabs HER by the shoulders)

You better not have cost me my wife.

(VALERIA kneels HIM in the groin. MIGUEL falls down.)

VALERIA

I told you to get away from me.

(VALERIA exits Stage Right.)

END OF SCENE

ACT ONE

Scene 4

SETTING: Miguel and Anabel's reception. A couple bottles of whiskey and champagne sit on the bar counter Stage Left. A few flukes of champagnes are already poured. A table and chairs are Center Stage.

AT RISE: EMILIO is leaning on the bar. HE contemplates grabbing another drink, but HE stops himself.

(ANABEL enters Stage Right.)

EMILIO

Well if it isn't the blushing bride!

(ANABEL ignores HIM and drowns a fluke of champagne. SHE reaches for another, but EMILIO stops HER.)

Woah! Slow down, you don't want to be too drunk for your wedding night, do you?

ANABEL

(glares at HIM)

Leave me alone.

EMILIO

What happened to you?

ANABEL

Nothing.

EMILIO

Doesn't sound like nothing to me.

ANABEL

(takes a bottle from the counter and pours two glasses and places one front of EMILIO.)

All I wanted to do was help.

EMILIO

(takes a drink)

Help? Who?

ANABEL

(Mocks)

Who do you think, Emilio?

(drinks HER glass)

I thought it was the right thing to do.

EMILIO

We're adults. If we wanted to talk, we would've made an effort.

(Pause.)

You need to stop interfering in our lives. We're fine.

(ANABEL takes the glass from EMILIO's hand and drinks it.)

ANABEL

(bitterly laughs)

Sure, you're fine, and Miguel is fine choice of a husband, too.

EMILIO

What are you talking about?

ANABEL

(sarcastically)

Your brother is a world class gentlemen.

EMILIO

(laughs)

Is the honeymoon phase over already?

ANABEL

Didn't you and Miguel have a huge fight?

EMILIO

Yeah, we didn't talk to each other for several years.

ANABEL

Why?

EMILIO

Didn't he tell you?

ANABEL

It's not one of his proudest moments.

EMILIO

I don't want to cause trouble.

ANABEL

Emilio, tell me!

EMILIO

You should ask him.

ANABEL

Do you think he would tell me the truth? Or should I ask my mother-in-law?

EMILIO

She'll tell you a different story.

ANABEL

What do you mean?

EMILIO

(pours himself a drink)

She's his mother. What do you think?

ANABEL

Then you need to tell me.

(Pause.)

I want the truth.

EMILIO

(sighs)

He took a couple thousands from an aunt of ours.

ANABEL

What?

EMILIO

After the whole dilemma about our father leaving the construction company to me, I tried to make amends with Miguel. So, we worked together for a couple of years, and one of our aunts offered us a job. She wanted us to fix her roof, and well her son gave Miguel money for supplies and a down payment. But instead of letting me know, he pocketed the cash.

ANABEL

So, this isn't the first crime he got away with?

EMILIO

(lost)

Anabel, is Miguel in trouble?

ANABEL

Why didn't anyone say anything?

EMILIO

You know how family is. They rather protect their own than reveal an embarrassing detail.

ANABEL

You're telling me that no one told you.

(Pause.)

But, how did you find out?

EMILIO

I got curious after we were blacklisted from various projects. Even family members stopped calling us for small jobs!

(Pause.)

I guess, you can say that's the reason I don't feel bad that Miguel is having a hard time restarting the business. After all, he fucked it up to begin with.

ANABEL

So, Valeria never met him?

EMILIO

No, this was years before her.

(Pause.)

I didn't want him anywhere near me.

(ANABEL thinks about his statement and empties the glass in front of HER.)

ANABEL

Then why did you give him the company.

EMILIO

It was the only thing tying to this place. When Valeria and I broke up, I just give it to him.

ANABEL

She has a kid.

EMILIO

Who?

ANABEL

Valeria.

(Pause.)

A son.

EMILIO

(shocked)

What?

ANABEL

Alex is three years old.

EMILIO

But that means...

ANABEL

He's not yours.

EMILIO

What the fuck Anabel?

ANABEL

You deserve to know that he exists.

EMILIO

This is a really confusing conversation...

ANABEL

Pour me another glass.

EMILIO

You're going to regret this tomorrow morning.

(pours HER a glass and hands it to HER)

ANABEL

I don't think I will.

(Pause.)

Did Valeria ever tell you what really happened during spring break?

EMILIO

What more is there to say?

(Pause.)

She cheated on me.

ANABEL

No, she didn't.

EMILIO

What?

(Pause.)

She told me that she met someone.

ANABEL

(annoyed)

Do you only hear what you want?

EMILIO

(raises his voice)

What the fuck, Anabel? I listen.

ANABEL

First off, don't get defensive on me. You tend to overact, curse, and raise your voice when you do.

(annoyed EMILIO reaches for the bottle)

Second, you need to stop drinking because we're going to my apartment.

EMILIO

(confused)

I'm staying here.

ANABEL

No, both of you and Val need to stop acting like children and talk to each other. And I don't mean enter into a screaming match like you tend to do...

(pauses.)

Plus, it's best not to have an audience for this conversation.

EMILIO

Are you forgetting? I tried. The whole stack was piled against me! Valeria kept changing the rules on me.

ANABEL

Why didn't you call her bluff?

(Pause.)

I swear, it's like you two weren't dating for three years before all hell broke loose.

EMILIO

What the does that mean?

ANABEL

Call a spade a spade, and play your last card, Emilio.

(Pause.)

Go to her.

EMILIO

Last card? Do you drink and speak in metaphors?

(Pause.)

What aren't you telling me?

ANABEL

Listen to what she has to say.

EMILIO

She won't listen to me.

ANABEL

That's what you believe. Ask yourself, that night did you fight for her? Or did you fight her? There's a difference.

EMILIO

What kind of question is that? Of course, I wanted her. I wait for her. She never came back for me.

ANABEL

No, you left.

EMILIO

Of course, I left. The company only gave me a few days to pack my shit and start the following Monday. I wasn't going...

ANABEL

You never came back for her!

EMILIO

Yes, I did! I came back every weekend for...

(Pause.)

Why am I explaining this to you?... You aren't the one I'm trying to win back...

ANABEL

Exactly! Let's go.

(Pause.)

You need to meet Alex, too.

(ANABEL and EMILIO exit Stage Right.)

END OF SCENE

Act One

Scene 5

SETTING: The living room in ANABEL and VALERIA's apartment. A couch with pillows, a chair, and a side table are Center Stage. On the side table is a framed photo. Random bridal accessories and toys are thrown about the room. Luggage bags are on Stage Left. Door is closed Stage Right.

AT RISE: VALERIA enters Stage Left with a piece of luggage. She throws it on the couch and starts stuffing it with clothes. Looking around the room, she picks up a few toys from the floor and throws them in another bag.

(KNOCKING is heard Off Stage. VALERIA pretends she can't hear it. KNOCKING continues.)

ANABEL

I know you are in there, Val. Open the door.

(VALERIA looks at door and hesitates.)

This dress doesn't have pockets, and my keys locked in with you.

VALERIA

Aren't you supposed to be with your husband?

ANABEL

You fucking kidding me, right?

VALERIA

He better not be on the other side of that damn door!

ANABEL

I didn't bring him. Open up!

(VALERIA walks to the door and unlocks it. ANABEL enters Stage aright. EMILIO enters after HER. VALERIA is left to close the room behind HIM.)

VALERIA

What's he doing here?

ANABEL

He's visiting.

(Pause. looks at the bags)

Where are you going?

VALERIA

Don't worry. I'll be out of here tomorrow morning.

ANABEL

(freaks out)

What? Why?

VALERIA

What do you mean why?

(ANABEL sits down on the sofa, and VALERIA joins her.)

ANABEL

You can't go...I don't know what to do, Valeria!

(cries)

What did I walk into earlier?

VALERIA

Anabel, I...

ANABEL

(cries)

I didn't know...I swear, I didn't know.

EMILIO

(lost)

What's going on?

ANABEL

Emilio, we're having a moment!

(EMILIO sits on the empty chair. Satisfied ANABEL continues.)

It's over.

(Pause.)

Everything is over.

VALERIA

That's up to you, Anabel.

ANABEL

What do you mean it's up to me?

VALERIA

Are you going to be able to give up your happy ending?

(Pause.)

You've been planning your wedding to Miguel since your three month anniversary.

ANABEL

I should've known something was up when he freaked out the first time he saw you, but I let him convince me it was nerves.

VALERIA

What? You didn't tell me that!

ANABEL

Why did I trust him?

EMILIO

Isn't too late to worried about trusting Miguel? You married him this afternoon.

ANABEL

Emilio!

(EMILIO looks at VALERIA for a hint, but SHE shakes HER head at HIM.)

EMILIO

Can I use the restroom?

VALERIA

Down the hall, second door to the left.

(EMILIO exits Stage Left.)

VALERIA

(realization dawns on her)

He's been in our home.

(Pause.)

He's babysat Alex.

ANABEL

I let him into our lives.

(Pause.)

He manipulated us...me...you. I'm so sorry, Val!

VALERIA

Aren't you pulling the same stunt right now?

ANABEL

(offended)

What are you talking about?

VALERIA

Why did you bring Emilio with you?

ANABEL

He deserves to know the truth, and you need to tell him.

VALERIA

That's my decision.

(Pause.)

You always do this, Anabel. Not every issue can be solved by throwing your friend into the fire.

ANABEL

It was my fault!

VALERIA

What?

ANABEL

If I hadn't convinced you to come with me, it wouldn't have happened. You would've been safe at home!

VALERIA

What are you taking about?

(Pause.)

I never blamed you.

ANABEL

I blamed myself. I kept pushing you to go out and live little.

Look what happened!

VALERIA

Then it's my fault too. I choose to go with you.

(Pause.)

Are you telling me that it's my fault?

ANABEL

What? No!

VALERIA

Exactly! We aren't at fault for what Miguel decided to take from me.

ANABEL

(voice cracks)

He did it, didn't he?

VALERIA

Yeah, he did.

ANABEL

Fucking asshole.

(Pause.)

I really know how to pick them, huh?

VALERIA

Anabel...

ANABEL

Do you want me to kick Emilio out?

VALERIA

No, I can't handle another one of your fix Val projects. I'm not broken.

(Pause. Looks around for EMILIO)

You made him drive you here, didn't you?

ANABEL

(sadly smiles)

Maybe, but both of you have been miserable for so long! And when I told you about the wedding arrangements, it seemed like everything finally fell into place. You started acting like yourself, and Emilio dumped his good for nothing girlfriend.

VALERIA

The only reason, I agreed to be here is because you are my best friend. And of course, I acted like myself again, why was I going to throw a fit? It's not my wedding! I just wanted to be here for you like you were there for me all those years ago.

ANABEL

I didn't mean...

VALERIA

You never do.

ANABEL

(frustrated)

I'm changing out of this ridiculous dress!

(exits Stage Left. EMILIO enters Stage Left.)

EMILIO

(looking at the frame on the coffee table)

So, this is where you've been? I didn't know you lived with Anabel.

(Pause.)

I should've come to their Christmas party last year. It was here, wasn't it?

VALERIA

(watching him)

I wasn't here.

EMILIO

(finally looks at her)

Where were you?

VALERIA

I spent Christmas with my mom.

EMILIO

(smiles)

How's she doing?

VALERIA

What are you doing here?

EMILIO

(looks at the bags on the couch)

Where are you going?

VALERIA

Nowhere.

EMILIO

Why is so hard to get a straight answer from you?

VALERIA

Why do you like to question everything?

(VALERIA zips the bag and drops it near the door.)

EMILIO

Are you okay?

(VALERIA paces the length of room.)

Do I make you uncomfortable?

VALERIA

No...I don't know how to be in the same room with you.

EMILIO

You did just fine five minutes ago.

VALERIA

(stops walking and stares at him in surprise)

I'm glad it appeared that way.

(EMILIO takes a sit on the couch and gestures to the spot next to HIM.)

EMILIO

Come on, we knew this was going to happen. At least, now we have privacy.

(VALERIA steals a glance Stage Left and sits down. A silence lingers for a few minutes. EMILIO clears HER throat and VALERIA finally looks at HIM.)

EMILIO

Didn't Anabel tell you that she invited me?

VALERIA

(HIS question catches HER by surprise, but SHE answers it.)
Yeah, but I hoped you won't show.

EMILIO

Oh...you know, I turned around a couple of times.

VALERIA

Yea...

EMILIO

Yeah. I made it to Buc-ee's in Wharton twice before I finally drove straight here.

(Pause.)

I could've made it on time, but I...

(lingering silence)

So, you don't care that I'm here?

VALERIA

Today wasn't about us, Emilio.

(Pause.)

Hell, it just got more complicated than we could ever imagine.

EMILIO

What?

VALERIA

Emilio, we don't have anything left to resolve. Please go.

EMILIO

(impatiently)

That can't be true. You keep running away from me.

(Pause.)

Your actions mean something.

VALERIA

I don't know what you want me to say.

EMILIO

Tell me I'm not wasting my time.

(Pause.)

Tell me I let Anabel drag me back here because you miss me too.

VALERIA

We were never good at talking.

EMILIO

Then listen.

(VALERIA waits for HIM to collect HIS thoughts.)

I thought I meant more to you, but you didn't even come by the apartment to pick up your stuff. Instead you waited until I left for Houston before showing your face again!

VALERIA

What was I supposed to do, Emilio? You made it clear that night that we were done.

EMILIO

What if I wasn't ready to let you go? What if I was hoping you would come back, so that we could talk?

VALERIA

I didn't want you to take it back.

EMILIO

(cuts HER off and raises HIS voice)

Its crystal fucking clear you didn't want me to begin with.

(Pause.)

But I thought at least, I deserved a reason why. Didn't our relationship mean something to you?

VALERIA

Of course, it did.

(Pause.)

And I told you why!

EMILIO

No. You didn't. You called me an asshole, mentioned my good for nothing father, but you never explained. So, tell me, why?

VALERIA

(dodges his question)

I'm sorry for using your biggest insecurity against you, but I knew that if I mentioned your father, you would shut down...I needed you to push me away.

EMILIO

Push you away? What? Why?

(Pause.)

You and Anabel keep sending me mixed signs.

VALERIA

(panicked)

What did she tell you?

(EMILIO picks up a toy from the floor and shows it to HER.)

EMILIO

You have a son.

(Pause.)

Why didn't you tell me?

VALERIA

Believe me, there's so many things I've wanted to tell you, but Alex isn't one of them.

EMILIO

So, he's not mine?

VALERIA

Of course not.

EMILIO

Then why did Anabel want me to meet him?

VALERIA

(shocked)

She what?

EMILIO

Yeah, she was acting strange at the reception. Asking me about Miguel's past and the fight I had with him several years back. Remember?

VALERIA

What the hell, Anabel?

(pause.)

Yeah, I remember.

EMILIO

Val, what did Anabel mean when she said that you didn't cheat on me during Spring Break?

VALERIA

What?

EMILIO

We didn't break up in March.

(Pause.)

You ended things in May.

VALERIA

You were gone that week.

(Pause.)

That's the week you visited your uncle. He volunteered to help you look for a job, remember?

EMILIO

Yeah, I met with a couple of his associates.

(VALERIA glances Stage Left.)

What happened that weekend?

VALERIA

I...I went out with Anabel.

EMILIO

I thought you said you stayed home.

VALERIA

I lied.

(Pause.)

I...

EMILIO

Why did you lie to me? It's not like I was going to get mad you went out with her.

VALERIA

We were supposed to meet Miguel that weekend, but he cancelled on us.

EMILIO

Wait, you're telling me you were supposed to meet my brother?

Why?

VALERIA

Anabel and Miguel started dating that semester.

EMILIO

Oh shit, I didn't know that.

VALERIA

I didn't know he was your brother. Hell, I didn't even know he was Anabel's boyfriend.

EMILIO

Huh?

VALERIA

I don't think this is good idea. We shouldn't...

EMILIO

We shouldn't do what?

VALERIA

(mumbles)

Anabel, why can't you let me have my secrets?

EMILIO

(doesn't hear her and continues)

Were they right?

VALERIA

What?

EMILIO

Did I jump to conclusions? I heard you when you said that you felt unhappy in our relationship, but is that why you cheated on me?

VALERIA

Please let's leave the past in the...

EMILIO

(notices her change in demeanor)

What are you hiding?

VALERIA

What else is there left to hide? You already know what happened!

(Pauses.)

There's no sense in retelling the story.

EMILIO

(studies her)

That's not the truth tho.

VALERIA

Yeah, well sometimes it easier to lie than to let the truth breathe the same air we do.

EMILIO

Don't you think it's time to stop letting it ruin our lives?

VALERIA

You're fine. It's wasn't your life that was destroyed.

EMILIO

Is that so? Then, why the fuck are we having this conversation then?

VALERIA

You are the one that wants to revisit with our past! I told you...

EMILIO

(cuts HER off)

You kept running away! Do you know how long I waited to hear from you? How many messages I left you? How many times I drove past your mom's house hoping to catch a glimpse of you?

(Pauses.)

Val, I came down every other weekend for three months, but it was like you disappeared. No one would tell where you where!

(VALERIA doesn't answer.)

Fuck, you didn't even give me a chance to fight for you! For us!

VALERIA

Like you would've ever forgiven me... I couldn't even forgive myself.

EMILIO

You shouldn't have been the one deciding everything for us. We were a team.

VALERIA

We were a team till it happened. Then it was me. Alone.

EMILIO

We could've fought for each other!

(VALERIA gets up from the couch and starts pacing.)

VALERIA

Not if you knew...

(Pauses.)

Not if I told you...

(EMILIO gets up and stands before VALERIA to stop HER from pacing. VALERIA takes a step back creating distance between THEM.)

EMILIO

(worried)

What aren't you telling me?

VALERIA

The truth.

EMILIO

(nods HIS head)

That's all I've ever wanted.

VALERIA

(HER voice begins to shake.)

I... I... I...

(pauses and looks away. Appears to be zoning out of HER current situation.)

I lost total control...

EMILIO

Lost control? What are you talking about?

VALERIA

I...I...couldn't fight back! I couldn't...

(begins to cry)

EMILIO

Fight? Valeria, why are you crying? What are you talking about?

VALERIA

(finds the words through the tears)

You were gone for a week and a half!

EMILIO

I was interviewing at different plants. Please don't cry, they wanted me to get a feel of the place and my coworkers before I relocated.

(Pause.)

And I had to stay for those extra days to make sure that all my paperwork was in order. I'm sorry, I...

VALERIA

(still in tears)

Emilio, I needed you here.

EMILIO

I wanted to make sure we would be okay...I know you were hesitant to move away from your mom, but I thought I was making the right decision for us. We...

VALERIA

That wasn't the problem...I was...do you know how it feels to lose control? To have it taken from you?

(Pause.)

And have the one person you want so far away?

EMILIO

I never meant for you to feel that way. I didn't want you to feel like I was controlling your life rather I...

VALERIA

Emilio, can you shut up? I'm trying to tell you something!

(Emilio stays quiet and looks into HER eyes.)

The truth is my relationship to you didn't make me unhappy, and I was excited to start a new life with you.

(Pause.)

(VALERIA takes a deep breath finally finds the strength to stop crying and wipes HER tears.)

That night, I didn't consent to any of it, and... I didn't know how to deal with it. So, I lied to you.

EMILIO

What are you talking about?

VALERIA

I was attacked.

EMILIO

You said you...

VALERIA

Listen.

EMILIO

(confused)

What?!

VALERIA

How do you tell your boyfriend that you went out with friends to a party, and some asshole decided to take advantage of you?

EMILIO

(angry)

Wait, are you trying to tell me you were...?

VALERIA

(Pause.)

Yes. I was raped.

(tries to catch her breath)

That's not exactly what you wanted to hear when you came back from job hunting. The company had just offered you a lead position, Emilio.

(Pause.)

I wasn't going to drag you down with me.

EMILIO

Did you really think that little of me? I would've been there for you.

VALERIA

Exactly!

EMILIO

You don't fucking get it! All this time, you had me believe that you betrayed me by sleeping with some jackass. When in reality, you...

(Pause.)

You were raped.

VALERIA

(begins to cry again)

I didn't want to be a victim to you, and I didn't want you to see me differently. You were supposed to move on!

(Pauses.)

You had an entire team of engineers to take care of and a new city to call home.

(Pauses.)

I refused to be the reason you changed your plans and stayed behind.

EMILIO

Valeria, you were the reason I had those plans to begin with, so how was I supposed to forget you?

VALERIA

I made it easy for you!

EMILIO

(demanding)

You know, I didn't want an easy relationship. I just wanted you!

VALERIA

(tries to walk past him)

I told Anabel that this was a bad idea. I shouldn't have gone to the wedding!

(ANABEL enters Stage Left.)

ANABEL

No, I'm glad you came.

(Pause.)

And you need to tell him the whole truth, Val.

VALERIA

Anabel, what are you doing?

ANABEL

If you don't tell him. I will.

VALERIA

No.

ANABEL

You can't run away from this one.

(Pause.)

Believe me, I've thought about it.

VALERIA

That's enough.

ANABEL

Didn't you have green eyes as a child, Emilio?

VALERIA

Don't!

ANABEL

What else do you have to lose, Val?

VALERIA

Think about what you have to lose!

ANABEL

(bitterly laughs)

I've already lost everything, or do you expect me to go back to him?

VALERIA

If you chose him, it's okay. I'll...

ANABEL

Screw you! I'm not changing my mind.

(Pause.)

Not after what happened today.

EMILIO

Can someone fill me in? What's going on?

ANABEL

Why couldn't you remember sooner? You would've saved me...us...from all this mess.

(Door on Stage Right opens and MIGUEL enters.)

MIGUEL

Anabel!

ANABEL

Get out of my apartment!

MIGUEL

We're married. What's yours is mine now!

(VALERIA moves away from HIM.)

EMILIO

What's wrong with you?

MIGUEL

Ya'll need to get out of this apartment. My wife and I have some things to talk about.

ANABEL

There's nothing to discuss. I want nothing to do with you!

MIGUEL

Baby, you can't let her lies come between us.

(Pause.)

Today was supposed to be unforgettable.

ANABEL

(annoyed)

Oh, it was unforgettable, but I'm sure it's not for the same reasons you wanted it to be.

MIGUEL

(turns towards VALERIA)

This is your fault!

(EMILIO blocks HIS path.)

You could've just kept your damn mouth shut.

VALERIA

And you could've kept your damn hands to yourself.

EMILIO

What are you guys talking about?

(MIGUEL looks at HIM and then at the girls.)

ANABEL

Alex is your nephew.

EMILIO

What?

VALERIA

Anabel!

ANABEL

What? You weren't going to tell him.

EMILIO

You said that you were raped...

VALERIA

(without emotion)

By Miguel.

EMILIO

You, son of a bitch...

(EMILIO's fist connects with MIGUEL's face, but before the fight can escalate any further, VALERIA pulls EMILIO away.)

What are you doing?

VALERIA

How much more control are you willing to give him? If you keep this up, he's wins.

EMILIO

(shocked)

What? What do you mean he wins?

VALERIA

He's taken enough from us.

(EMILIO looks at HER shocked. MIGUEL gets up and laughs.)

MIGUEL

She's right, you know? Not only did I enjoy her but watching you fail to salvage our father's company was priceless.

(EMILIO glares at HIM.)

I should thank you for signing it over to me.

EMILIO

Val, if you don't want me to kill him.

(Pause.)

One of us needs to leave.

MIGUEL

You can't come in here and pretend to be in charge, Emilio. They are mine.

VALERIA

(to Miguel)

Excuse me, what makes you think you have any power here?

MIGUEL

You kept the child, so I would beg to differ.

VALERIA

That had nothing to do with you, and you'll never be part of his life.

(ANABEL walks to the door and opens it.)

ANABEL

When I'm ready to talk to you, I'll let you know. Now get the fuck out before I call the cops.

MIGUEL

You need me, Anabel.

ANABEL

I need you to go.

(MIGUEL exits Stage Right. ANABEL slams the door after HIM.)

I'm going to call my parents.

VALERIA

(to Anabel)

We still need to talk.

ANABEL

(nods)

Right now, you and Emilio talk.

(ANABEL exits Stage Left. VALERIA sits on the sofa, buries HER face in HER hands and sighs loudly.)

EMILIO

Val?

(VALERIA refuses to look at HIM.)

Hey.

(EMILIO kneels down before HER.)

You okay?

VALERIA

(looks up and laughs)

I'm sick of people asking me that.

EMILIO

(gives HER a small smile)

I would imagine.

VALERIA

Emilio, you know this isn't going to work out, right?

EMILIO

Yeah.

VALERIA

I let you go three years ago, and now knowing the truth...I...

EMILIO

Can I meet him one day?

VALERIA

(confused)

Why?

EMILIO

Because he's yours.

VALERIA

(gets up from the sofa and walks towards the door)

I'm not making that decision right now.

EMILIO

Valeria, I just found out you were raped by my own brother. How do you expect me to go home like that? Can't we...I love you... I hope you know that.

VALERIA

I'll always love you, Emilio. You were my first love, but life has made a fool of us all.

(Pause.)

I'm not letting my secret destroy everyone I care about, so I'm done. I'm going to pick up the pieces.

EMILIO

What about me? I don't know what to do.

VALERIA

None of us ever do, but you have a whole life to get back to. I made sure of it from the very beginning. So, take my advice and stop holding onto the past.

EMILIO

Valeria, I didn't come all this way for a goodbye. Please!

VALERIA

No, I'm choosing myself this time, Emilio.

(Pause.)

And that means getting my son from my mom's house.

(VALERIA grabs HER purse and exits Stage Right.)

END OF SCENE.

Act One

Scene 6

SETTING: The living room in ANABEL and VALERIA's apartment. A couch with pillows, a chair, and a side table are Center Stage. On the side table is a framed photo. Room hasn't changed much. EMILIO is long gone.

AT RISE: VALERIA, ANABEL, and ALEX are on the sofa. VALERIA keeps running her hand through his hair as he sleeps. Her body language portrays a protective mother.

ANABEL

You know Alex looks like him.

VALERIA

What?

ANABEL

They have the same mannerisms, too.

VALERIA

No, they don't.

ANABEL

I noticed it a couple of months ago. You were working late, so Miguel and I took him to the zoo.

(Pause.)

I was watching them, and I don't know I just knew.

VALERIA

That's impossible.

ANABEL

(continues)

Alex fell asleep half way through, so Miguel was carrying him around...you should have seen them. At first, I thought I was lucky, Miguel would make a great dad someday, but then I saw it. Their eyelashes are too long that when they sleep their eyes barely close. And in the sunlight, their hair has the same reddish highlights.

(Pause.)

Why didn't I see this before, Valeria?

VALERIA

Why didn't you tell me?

ANABEL

I love him.

(voice creaks)

I didn't want to believe it. Why did he do this to us?

VALERIA

He had his own plans, Anabel.

(Pause.)

He wasn't thinking about us.

ANABEL

My dad's ready to kill him.

VALERIA

(laughs)

He gonna have to get in line.

ANABEL

(smiles)

I'm sure.

VALERIA

What are you going to do?

ANABEL

Do you think I need to return the gifts?

VALERIA

What?

ANABEL

You know I always wanted an aqua Kitchen Aid.

VALERIA

You don't even cook or bake.

ANABEL

I can start.

VALERIA

(teases)

We both know you won't.

ANABEL

So, there has to be a clause. I mean, I should get a prize for going from happily married to finding my husband is an asshole in only a matter of hours.

VALERIA

So...what are you going to do?

ANABEL

I want my marriage annulled.

VALERIA

You sure? Alex and I can go.

ANABEL

Why would you?

VALERIA

Why would you want us around?

(Pause.)

I don't want us to be a reminder of what you lost.

ANABEL

Did I really lose though?

(Pause.)

He's not worth losing family for...that's what you and Alex are...
my family.

(The girls embrace.)

VALERIA

Today sucked.

ANABEL

(laughs through a couple of tears)

Yeah, it did.

(The girls pull back and look at Alex. ANABEL pulls a
blanket on HIM. The lights dim.)

END OF PLAY

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

Nicole Cardenas is an alumnus of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley holding a BA in English 7-12, and she earned her MFA in Creative Writing in May 2019. Currently, she resides in Brownsville, Texas and teaches at one of the local high schools. She has published her work in the local newspaper throughout her collegiate years, and her email address is ncardenas147@gmail.com.